

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, June 10. 1708.

IT is some time ago that I promis'd to say something about our new Prophets, but so many things of Moment intervening, and the Time of the Discovery of their Delusions approaching, I have purposely omitted it; I have been prompted to jest with them, and bestow some Satyr upon them, but really the miserable Objects rather move Compassion, and the strong Delusion, which it seems they are given up to, is so visible a Token of the Judgments of God upon them, that I cannot think they are the Subject of Satyr, but rather of most serious Pity and Commiseration, and we ought rather to pray for them, that God would restore their Judgments,

and put a Stop to the spreading of such Impostures in the World.

A great many Men of Learning and Judgment have spoke to their Opinions, and largely as well as learnedly enquir'd into, and as some think, answer'd their Pretences to Inspiration; and I shall not enter into that Dispute, I shall not attempt to prove, that all Sorts of Inspiration is ceas'd, that the Prophetick Spirit is entirely with-drawn, or that God will no more speak by the Mouths of Prophets as of Old; these things have been already stated by the Reverend Dr. Blackall, Mr. Callamy, and others, after whom I pretend to more Modesty than to mention the Case. But

But I cannot pass the Manner and Management of these People without some Remarks, which I shall do with Decency to the People themselves, and with I hope as much Seriousness as the Case it self calls for—That their Inspirations are immediately from the Spirit, is not the Case; to say they are, is very assuming; to say they are not, is a formidable Negative; and to say so on either hand, and no more, is forming no Argument: But shall I offer at a Scruple about the Manner; the Extasies, the Agitations, Distortions, Convulsions, and other Extravagancies in which their Prophecies, as they call them, are utter'd, and which they alledge, are the Effects of the Operation or Actings of the Divine Spirit.

This seems to me, I say, seems to me, for I impose upon no Mans Judgment, to be different and something opposite to the constant Method of the Spirit of God in all the Ages of the World, when his Spirit did plainly inspire his Servants; the Prophets and Apostles, who we allow to be Divinely Inspired, their Prophecies were deliver'd with all the Steadiness of Mind, the awful Gravity of Behaviour, the Energy and Beauty of Argument, the Force of Language, in Calmness and Sedateness of Temper. I cannot read of any thing like Extasie or Agitation in the whole Word of God; the Prophets *Elijah* and *Elisba* spake in the plainest Manner, convers'd with the common Freedom; the Prophets *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel* and *Daniel* deliver'd their Prophecies with Gravity and Fervour of Reasoning, full of Argument, but full of Temper, and by Strength of Words expressing what was to come to pass, and their Visions are described as Visions, the Event of which was left for Time to make out—It is alledg'd, that *Balaam* was in an Agitation; it is true that the

Spirit of God over-ruled *Balaam's* Design, but he was no more in an Agitation, such as we now speak of, than his Ass was, when God open'd his Eyes, and shut those of his Masters; nor is the Matter of *Balaam's* Agitation any more than a Supposition.

Why then should the Spirit of God be supposed to use a different Method in the dispensing the Prophetick Gift now, from his usual Manner in all Ages? Again, it is true, that tho' the Spirit of God has not, yet the Devil has on various Occasions made use of this very Method in uttering his Delusions, and putting forwards his Impostures in the World, as in the Extasies of the Priests of *Baal cutting themselves with Knives*, &c. *1 Kings 18. 28.* and in the Priests of the Heathen in their Sacrifices, many of which among the *Americans* are to be found using Distortions and Extasies to this Day, in their Pawawings, Sacrificings to the Devil, Conjurations, &c. and the Impostures and Exorcisms in the Story of the Devil of *Loudon*, and the Devil of *Mascon*, and several others, the Accounts of which are extant among us and very familiar.

Now that the Devil may on all Occasions have mimick'd the Spirit of God, it may be suppos'd; but that the Spirit of God should imitate the Devils Method, in order to work on the Minds of the People, is blasphemous to imagine.

I do not say that this is an Argument to prove, that these Inspirations, as they call them, are not or cannot be from the Spirit of God; but I do think, I may be allow'd to offer this as a reasonable Suspicion, and there I leave it.

Again. Nor shall I argue from the Disappointment they have now receiv'd in the Case of raising a Man from the Dead, that therefore they are no true Prophets—Sir *Richard Buckley* having prepared

prepared the World for it, by telling them, " That it is not Essential to a true Prophet, that what he prophesies should come to pass; but I crave their Leave to make some short Observations upon this Part of the Matter.

To Sir *Richard Buckley's* new Thesis, I say; 1. Tho' it may not be Essential to a true Prophet, that all which he prophesies should come to pass, yet it is a scurvy Token to judge a false Prophet by, when nothing he ever says comes to pass; perhaps it may be said of this or that Prophet, that we do not read, that all he said came to pass; but it will be hard to name us a Prophet in the Scripture, of whom it can be said, that nothing he said ever came to pass; and I doubt this may too justly be said to be the Character of our Prophets, and that without entring into Particulars.

2. The End of Prophecy is foretelling something which is to come; the very Meaning of the Word, as well as the Meaning of the Office, is to *predict*, signifying to speak of something before it is; he that speaks of what is not, nor ever shall be, speaks nothing at all, and is not a *false Prophet*, nor a *true*, for he is no Prophet at all—And therefore the Scripture calls a false Prophet a Deceiver, and uses the same Word for them both; and I crave Leave to query of the Learned, whether the Term false Prophet be not an Error in the Tran-

slators, and whether it be a proper Term, or only a Paraphrase on the Thing, really signifying only a pretended Prophet, or an Impostor and Deceiver; since not to prophesie true is not to prophesie at all.

If this be just, then Sir *Richard* is confuted of course, for that no Man can be a Prophet, but he which does prophesie what is true; and the Story of *Nineveh* will not hold against this, for 'tis plain, *Jonah's* Prophecy was a Preaching to *Nineveh* to awaken them with God's Judgments which were to fall on them unless they repented, and the Consequence proved it; nor did the Repentance do any thing more than adjourn the Judgment, for that *Nineveh* was afterwards destroy'd; besides *Jonah's* Prophecy was to be taken in the Sence of God's ordinary Course, in which God says expressly what Time, *viz. Forty Days*, *Jon. 3, 4.*

I shall in my next enter a little upon the Subject of raising this Dead Man, in my Debate of which it may be necessary to enquire, who he was, what they proposed in raising him, and what the Effect of this Disappointment may probably be; and so dismiss this melancholly Subject, and commit the unhappy People to the Spirit of God to illuminate their deluded Minds, and save them from the Mists and Clouds they now wander in.

MISCELLANEA.

AND now for a Battle in *Flanders*, says the News; and we are very fond of our Accounts from *Flanders*, in Expectation they shall bring us another *Ramellies*; and what says this dull Fellow the *Review* to it, say the Mercorial Sons of *Athens*, that are every Day for News and *Wonder-liks*, as the *Dutch* call it?

Why truly, Gentlemen, the *Review* asks you first a plain, homely, honest Question, Have you given God Thanks for the last Victory he sent you? And if you have not, he wonders at your *F A C E*, *i. e.* in plain *English*, how you can have the Impudence to expect another!

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